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The Communicative Value of the Polish Language Among Students in Northwestern Ukraine

Abstract

The dynamic development of teaching Polish as a foreign language, together with the official certification of this language knowledge, leads to the necessity in examination of communication needs and language preferences of young Ukrainians. In the article, we highlighted the usefulness of the Polish language among Polish philology students and language courses in north-western Ukraine. The study involved students of two universities, namely the Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University and the National University of Ostroh Academy. An analysis of the motivational factors for learning Polish among the respondents from Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University and the National University of Ostroh Academy shows that young people understand the importance and significance of foreign languages, including Slavic ones, in the modern world.

Keywords: Polish language in Ukraine; multilingualism; language acquisition

1 The State of Research on the Worldwide Situation of the Polish Language

The situation of the Polish language outside Poland has been an important research topic since the end of the 20th century. The first large collection on the global situation of Polish was the volume *Polish Language in the World*, edited by Władysław Miodunka (Miodunka, 1990). Seven years later another work was published, also presenting the situation of Polish around the world, this time edited by Stanisław Dubisz (Dubisz, 1997). A description of the state of research on the global situation of Polish up to 2018 was presented by W. Miodunka (Miodunka, 2010, pp. 51–71, 2014, pp. 199–226, 2020, pp. 7–33).

After 2018, research was divided into two groups, namely research on the Polish language of foreigners who live in Poland, e.g. Ukrainians and Chinese (Levchuk, 2019; Mikulska, 2021) and research on the situation of the Polish language in various countries, e.g. in Egypt (Dzierżawin, 2021). Comparative studies on the situation of Polish among people of Polish origin living in different countries, as well as the Polish language of foreigners living in Poland and countries bordering Poland, have also been conducted. (Krasowska, 2020; Krasowska et al., 2018; Levchuk, 2020b).

2 The State of Research on the Situation of the Polish Language in Ukraine

The situation of Polish in Ukraine has been described in the context of the entire country, most often in comparison with other countries (Dubisz, 2014, pp. 7–20; Karaś, 2015, pp. 18–35; Szum-

lańska, 2013, pp. 33–48). The second method is to describe the situation of Polish in individual regions, taking into account the current situation of Polish (Pawluk, 2015, pp. 97–106; Pelekhata, 2020; Shevchuk, 2021; Zelins'ka, 2020).

In spite of this research, attention must be paid to the lack of research on the usefulness of Polish among students of Polish philology and language courses. Students from Volyn were selected as the subject of our work. The description of teaching Polish at both universities chosen was the subject of discussion as early as 2009 (cf. Kratiuk & Sowtys, 2009, pp. 253–255; Mokłycia, 2009, pp. 245–248). However, this work was a short description of how the language courses and Polish studies functioned and did not research the use Polish in various communication situations. At this point, it should be mentioned that there still remains a lack of research on the usefulness of Polish in students' everyday life and their plans related to their knowledge of Polish. The dynamic development of teaching Polish as a foreign language, together with the official certification of this language knowledge, entails a need for the examination of communication needs and language preferences of young Ukrainians using Polish before their possible arrival to Poland. Polish language learners in Ukraine have different motives for learning than the representatives of the Polish diaspora from other parts of the world. For them, Polish is the language of the European Union, a prestigious language that opens up new opportunities (Gębal & Miodunka, 2020, pp. 92–95).

3 Findings & Group Profile

The total number of students covered by the research was 263. The study involved students of two universities, the Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University – 161 people (later referred to as group L), and the National University of Ostroh Academy – 102 people (later referred to as the group O). The research took place in May 2021.

3.1 Group L Profile

In terms of gender, women are dominant, comprising 84.5% of the respondents, with men representing men 15.5%. Most informants (96.8%) were born between 1999 and 2003 and the remaining respondents were born between 1997 and 1998. Most of the respondents were from the Volyn Oblast (62.1%), the Rivne Oblast (18.6%) and the L'viv Oblast (8.1%). The remaining people come from the oblasts of Ternopil, Chmelnytskyi, Zhytomyr, Ivano-Frankivsk, Vinnytsia, Dnipro-petrovsk, and Donetsk. The group includes both students of Polish studies and participants of Polish as foreign language courses. For the vast majority (96.9%), the first language is Ukrainian. 1.2% consider Russian to be their first language, and 1.9% consider Surzhyk (a mixed Ukrainian–Russian language¹) to be their first language.

3.2 Group O Profile

In terms of gender, women are dominant, comprising 71.6% of the respondents, with men representing 28.6%. Almost 98% of the respondents were born in the years 1999–2003, with the remaining individuals being born in 1998. Most respondents came from the Rivne Oblast (35.3%), the Volyn Oblast (17.6%), the Khmelnytsky Oblast (15.7%), the Ternopol Oblast (10.8%) and the L'viv Oblast (5.9%). The remaining respondents were born in the Zhytomyr, Cherkasy, Dnipropetrovsk, Ivano-Frankivsk, Vinnytsia, Poltava, Luhansk, and Zaporizhia districts. This group includes only participants of Polish as foreign language courses, as the university does not conduct Polish studies. The vast majority of the respondents claim Ukrainian as their first language (87.3%), Russian is the first language for 2.9%, and Surzhyk is claimed by 9.8% of the respondents as their first language.

¹ A discussion on the definition of the phenomenon and its position in the theory of language contacts is highlighted in the article Levchuk (2020a).

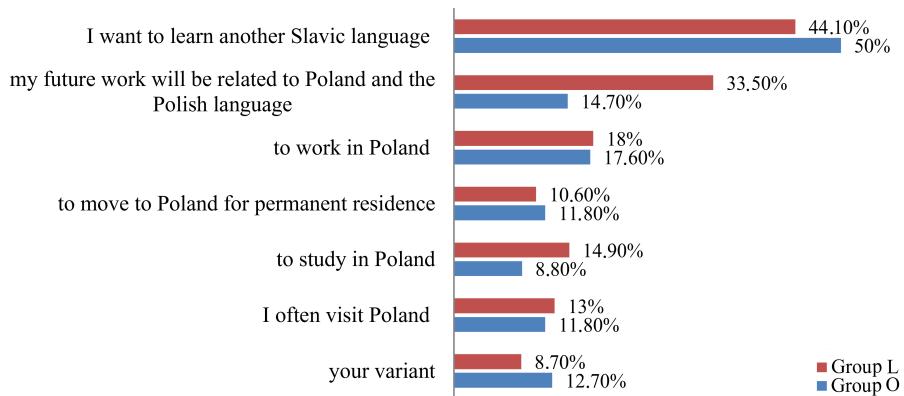


Figure 1. Motivation to learn Polish language (authors' own materials).

An analysis of the motivational factors for learning Polish among the respondents from Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University and the National University of Ostroh Academy shows that young people understand the importance and significance of foreign languages, including Slavic ones, in the modern world (44.1% in group L and 50% in group O). The popularity of Polish in the Volyn and Rivne regions is due primarily to the border location of these regions, as well as active and productive international contacts between Ukraine and Poland at various levels. This results in explanations such as: *I think I will need it in the future; I think it will be necessary; it is better than management, there is not always an opportunity to get acquainted with another language; it helps in employment, it helps to find a common language* (group O); *for self-development; knowledge of other languages – perspective* (group L).

33.5% of Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University students are confident that their future career will be related to Poland and Polish: *I love the Polish language and want to connect my life with it*. Such a high rate is primarily due to the answers of the Polish Studies students, who by choosing Polish studies have already decided to connect their lives to the Polish language. The percentage from Group O is much lower (14.7%), although the motivations are very ambitious: *I need it for my future political career, to build a strategic partnership with Poland*. 17.6% of young people from Ostroh plan to work in Poland, 11.8% of students want to go there for permanent residence, 11.8% often visit Poland, and 8.8% want to study there. Students from Lutsk also plan to work in Poland (18%), study at Polish universities (14.9%), often visit Poland (13%), and some want to settle there permanently (10.6%). Of course, to implement such plans, it is necessary to speak Polish. It is also worth paying attention to the answers that demonstrate a lack of motivation to learn Polish, as the decision to do so is made not by the respondents themselves but, for example, by the educational institution: *Because this subject is compulsory for study at the university; elective disciplin; it is an elective discipline* (group O); *according to the program at the university; I study at university; the university obliges me, but I am not interested in Polish; this is a mandatory part of the curriculum in my specialty, but I do not plan to live or work in Poland in the nearest future; I study because the university requires it* (group L) (see Figure 2).

The period of time spent learning Polish for respondents from group L is slightly longer than for respondents from group O. 67.1% of Volyn University students had been studying the language for two or more years, while for students from Ostroh Academy the percentage is only 26.5 %. We see a logical relationship in favour of group O with regards to the period from six months to a year: 73.5% compared to 32.9% of group L. The time spent learning Polish obviously has a clear impact on other criteria, including the level knowledge of Polish, which is demonstrated in Figure 3.

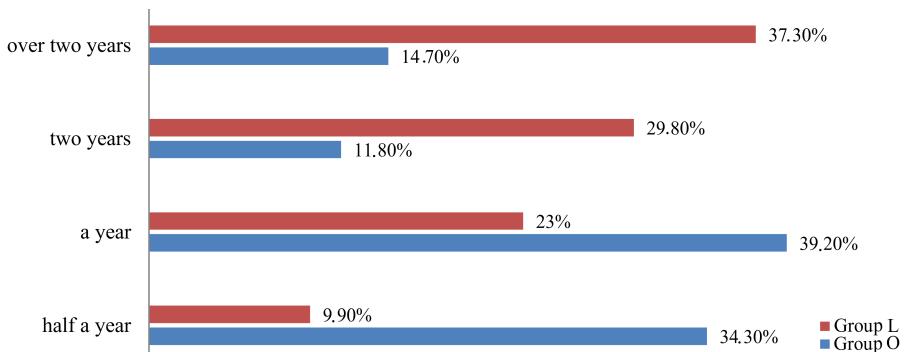


Figure 2. Period of learning Polish language (authors' own materials).

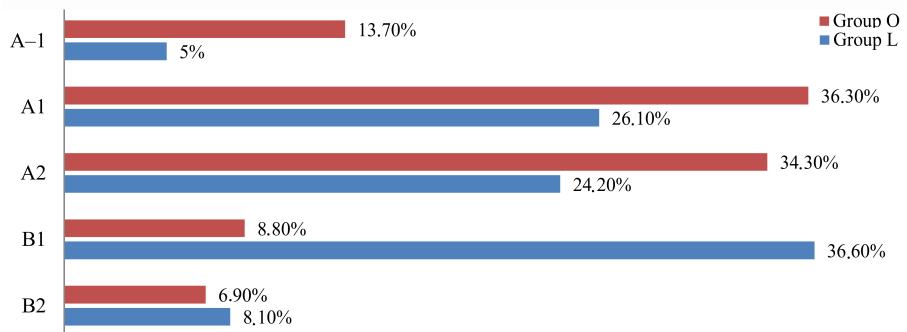


Figure 3. Declared level of Polish language knowledge (authors' own materials).

Of course, the Polish language proficiency criterion cannot be unequivocally objective, as respondents determined at their own discretion how well they are able to use the language. However, these research data allow us to trace the dependence of the level of knowledge on the time of study, which may, of course, indicate that the respondents could relatively correctly assess their ability to speak Polish (see Figure 3). Thus, 44.7% of people from group L described their level as B1–B2, which may be explained by the longer amount time spent learning the language (2–2.5 years). In group O 73.5% of students had been studying Polish from six months to one year and only 15.7% described their level as B1–B2, while the level of A1–A2 was declared by 70.6%, against 50.3% of respondents from group L. Level A-1, which indicates an inability to understand Polish, was declared by 13.7% of group O and 5% of group L.

Another important factor that influences Polish proficiency level is contact with the Polish language and cultural environment in general, native speakers in particular, and the availability of conditions for practical use of the knowledge and skills acquired in the higher education institutions. Visits to Poland serve this purpose most of all. In the last two years, due to the global Covid-19 pandemic, students of Ukrainian universities often did not have the opportunity to visit Poland. It is therefore natural to have a negative answer to the question of the number of visits to Poland: 45.1% in group O and 37.9% in group L had never visited Poland. On the other hand, among those who managed to visit Poland before the borders were closed or possessed the relevant permits, students of Lesya Ukrainka University dominated. 11.8% had been to Poland more than ten times and 13% had been to Poland between 5 and 10 times. 27.5% of respondents from the Ostroh Academy had visited Poland 2–4 times, and 19.6% had only been there once (see Figure 4).

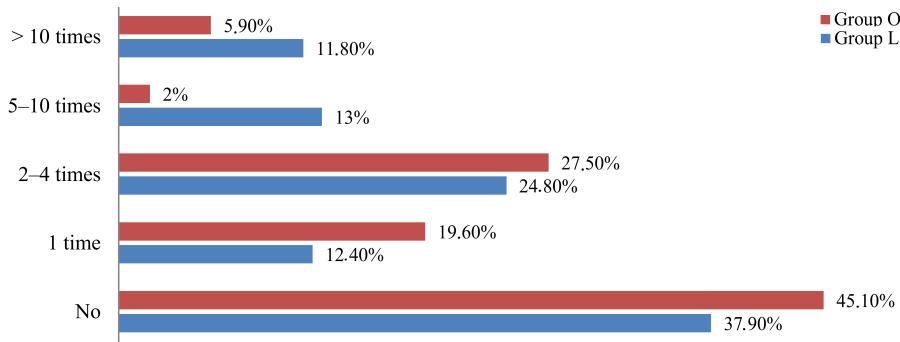


Figure 4. Number of stays in Poland (authors' own materials).

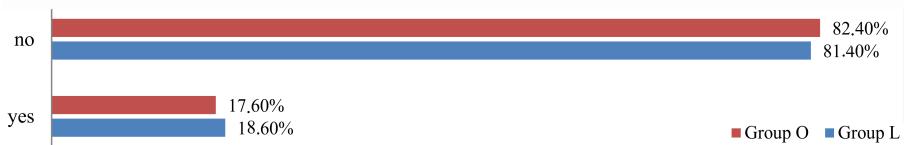


Figure 5. Work in Poland (authors' own materials).

In recent years, the number of students going to Poland for work during the holidays has significantly decreased. Of course, the primary reason for this was the Covid-19 pandemic, which led to the closure of borders or increased requirements for workers crossing the border and staying in the territory of Poland for a short time. Therefore, the answer to the question of whether the respondents had ever worked in Poland is mostly negative in both groups, with the percentages almost the same (82.4% group O, 81.4% group L) (see Figure 5).

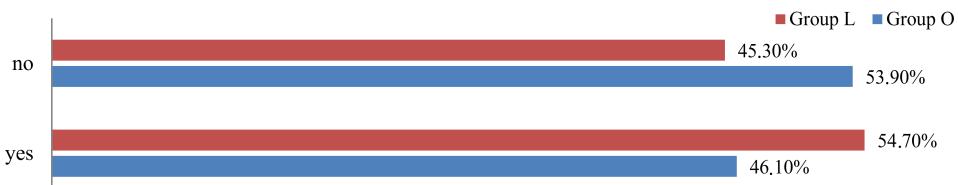


Figure 6. Family members working in Poland (authors' own materials).

The study shows that further employment of family members of our respondents in Poland is quite common, as almost half of the respondents say that they have relatives working in Poland (see Figure 6). In the group L, this figure is slightly higher (54.7%) than in group O (46.1%) (see Figure 6). Such data are not accidental, as the respondents' families live mostly in the border regions of Ukraine, where employment in Poland is common. Despite the changes caused by the pandemic, Polish employers are interested in Ukrainian workers, which determines both the high supply of jobs in Poland and the demand for such work among the Ukrainian population.

According to a study of plans for further education in Poland, more than half of the respondents do not intend to become a student of a Polish university. In group O, this figure is as high as 70.6%, and in group L is slightly lower, at 62.1% (see Figure 7). Many respondents do not want to go to Poland to study, even within the Erasmus+ exchange program, which is famous for being a program of international cooperation of the European Union which supports and allows

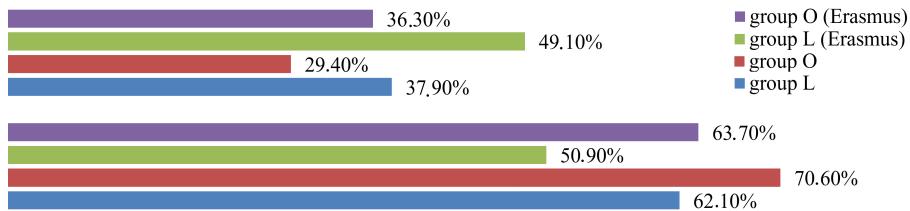


Figure 7. Plans for going to study in Poland (authors' own materials).

Ukrainian higher education institutions to implement the principles of educational and academic mobility. The fact shows that Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University and the National University of Ostroh Academy should intensify their efforts at disseminating information about the program and encourage students to apply for it. Since the Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University signed a double degree agreement with the Jan Dlugosz University of Natural Sciences and Humanities in Czestochowa (Poland) in 2021, the data on those wishing to study in Poland will probably be slightly different this autumn.

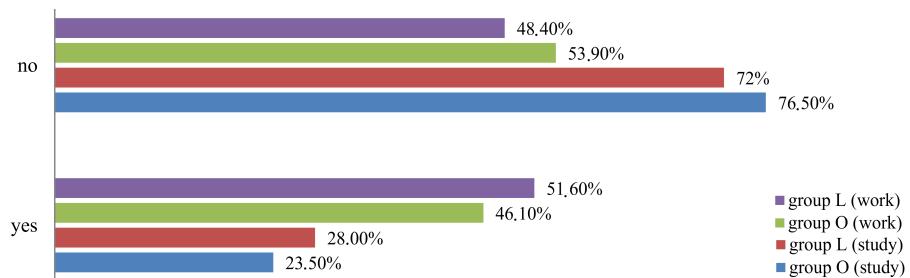


Figure 8. Plans to leave for Poland after graduation (authors' own materials).

For the most part, the respondents do not see themselves continuing their studies at Polish universities in their plans for the future (see Figure 8). 72% of people from group L and 76.5% of people from group O gave a negative answer to the question of whether they would leave for Poland after graduation in Ukraine. Instead, plans for further employment in Poland are more popular among the surveyed students from Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University (51.6%), and less so for students from the National University of Ostroh Academy (46.1%).

The frequency of Polish language usage criterion indicates that respondents from group L speak Polish more often than respondents from group O (see Figure 9). Hence, more than half of Volyn University students (57.1%) declare that they use Polish several times a week, and 11.8% of students claim that Polish is present in their daily communication. 20.5% of respondents say that they rarely use Polish. It is worth noting that, for the most part, the scope of their use of the Polish language is limited to the educational process. In particular, the respondents stated in their answers: *When I study; While studying; I learn; Do my homework; At Polish lessons; Teaching; I use it only at the university on practical sessions*. Sporadic answers indicate the use of Polish language work: *At work; At work in Ukraine*. Respondents from group O can be divided into two subgroups, which dominate according to their quantitative indicators: 37.3% rarely speak Polish, with the same percentage declaring that they do so several times a week. The Polish language is present in the everyday life of only 3.9% of students.

The previous criterion of our study indicates that respondents sporadically use Polish in everyday life (see Figure 10). However, the answers to the question about the place of Polish in everyday

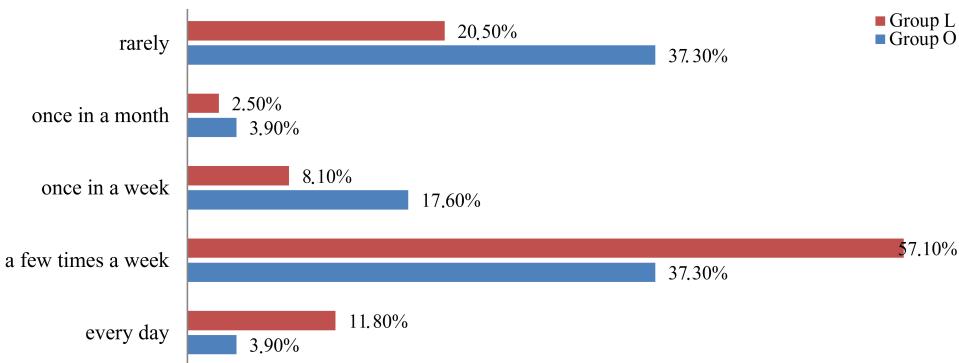


Figure 9. Frequency of Polish language usage (authors' own materials).

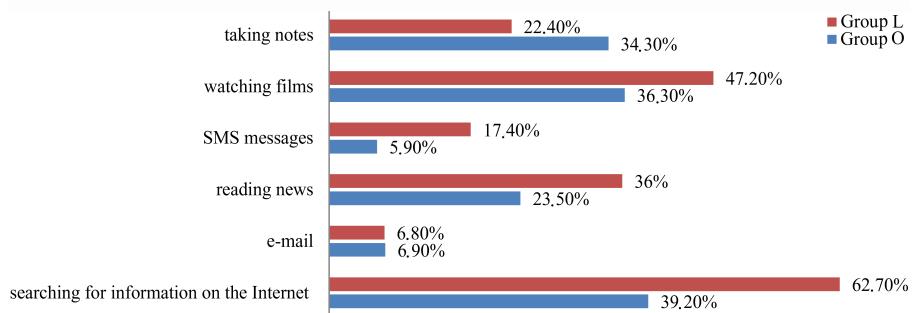


Figure 10. The place of the Polish language in everyday life (authors' own materials).

life reveal that the most common areas of contact between students and Polish are: the Internet, namely internet search engines, including those necessary for learning (62.7% in group L and 39.2% in group O), watching movies (47.2% group L, 36.3% group O), reading the news (36% group L, 23.5% group O), and taking notes (22.4% group L, 34.3% group O). Respondents much less often mention writing SMS messages and emails in Polish. Analysing the place of Polish in their daily lives, the representatives of group O give the following answers: *I study Polish at the language course; While learning Polish language; At the classes*. It is positive that several people mentioned that they speak Polish (*In communication; I use it in conversation; Communication*) on social networks: *I communicate in social networks*. It is also gratifying that one of the most common way of activating Polish vocabulary is cinema. On the initiative of the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Lutsk, a film discussion club called "Pleograf" has been operating for several years, and students of Polish play an active role in it. In the Ostroh Academy, there is a discussion club called "IDEA", in which members watch and discuss films, and hold thematic meetings and discussions, etc. Students from both universities have the opportunity to view the best examples of Polish cinema during the annual Days of Polish Cinema in Ukraine festival, other film festivals, and events organized by Polish diplomatic missions.

The respondents most often speak Polish with their professors (90.1% in group L and 65.7% in group O) (see Figure 11). This is logical because many courses are related to Polish. For example, Practical Polish Language Course, Modern Polish Language Course, Polish Language in Professional Communication and many others are taught in Polish. Polish is also used by professors in communication with students during extracurricular activities such as meetings in discussion clubs. The high number from Lesya Ukrainka National University is mainly due to the fact that many of the students participating in the survey study Polish as their primary foreign language. It also explains the popularity in group L of classmates as an interlocutor (54%). During practical

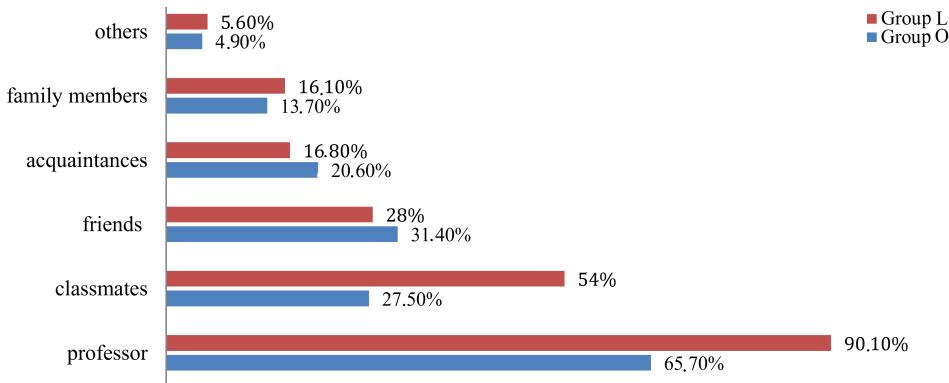


Figure 11. The main interlocutor of Polish language (authors' own materials).

classes, seminars, conferences, and extracurricular meetings, young people have the opportunity to talk, discuss, and share their ideas. There are few representatives of Polish families among the two groups, which explains why communication in Polish with family members is fairly rare (16.1% in group L and 13.7% in group O). Respondents from group L indicate that they communicate with their students and at work (*with students; with my students; at work; with the employer*), which shows that students are actively working, especially as Polish language teachers.

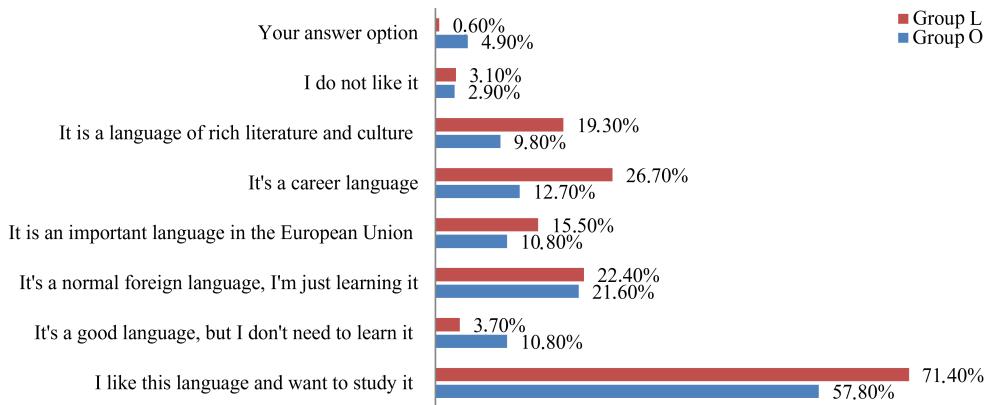


Figure 12. Emotional attitude to the Polish language (authors' own materials).

The responses to the question concerning emotional attitudes to Polish show a generally positive attitude (see Figure 12). 71.4% of people from group L and 57.8% of respondents from group O declare a desire to learn Polish and state that they like the language. 26.7% of students of Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University define Polish as a language of career growth. This shows their intention to devote their future profession to Polish and to work in the spheres where Polish is required. However, only 12.7% of people from Ostroh Academy have plans to use Polish in their future work. The relatively high (19.3%) proportion of group L who opined that Polish is “the language of a rich literature and culture” is probably due to the fact their university offers courses such as Polish Literature in a Global Context and History and Culture of Poland. Students from group L are also active members of the Polish Club in Lutsk, and thus take part in events that promote the best achievements of Polish culture and literature. Approximately the same percentage in the two groups (22.4% in group L and 21.6% in group O) were of the opinion that Polish

is a “normal foreign language” which they just happen to study. This indicates a neutral attitude to Polish and a low level of motivation. 10.8% of students in group O do not see a practical application for Polish. Only about 3% of all respondents from both groups stated that they do not like Polish.

According to our respondents, the popularity of Polish is due to the fact that a large number of people willing to learn this language are internally motivated. They have a desire to improve their life, find a better job, emigrate, or study abroad. According to the surveyed students of both educational institutions, the most common reasons for learning Polish language are the following opportunites:

1. the opportunity to work in Poland: *because many people go to Poland to work; many Ukrainians work in Poland; for work in Poland; many people now work and study in Poland; because they want to go to work in Poland; to work in Poland; because they work there; because many go to work; work in Poland; for work in Poland; because many people work in Poland, or want to work there; to work in Poland and it's sad; to be able to work in one of the EU countries; many Ukrainians go to Poland to study and work; people go to work and to study in Poland; to be able to work in one of the EU countries; to go to study or work in Poland; they want to go to Poland to earn money; people go to work in Poland en masse; opportunity to receive more money in Poland; I believe that Poland is a European, well-developed country. It provides good opportunities for Ukrainian students, helps them develop and learn. Many people study Polish for their future work, want to study in a European country; Poland – an opportunity to get a job in Europe, I think many people see a sort of perspective in the Polish language; strawberries in Poland; neighboring country, labor emigration (group L); work; they want to work or study; because they go to work in this country; plan to work; related to employment; to find a job there; needed for work; they want to go to Poland, in order to find a good job, and with language knowledge, it is easier to find more decent employment options; because they want to increase their knowledge of Polish; to replenish the number of the working class in Poland (group O).*
2. the opportunity to study in Poland: *to go to study or work; most young people (and not only) go to work and study in Poland. And knowledge of the language in a foreign country will come in handy. It is one of the factors that allow you to feel comfortable at work and at school; they want to learn the language, to study and to work in Poland and possibly live; for many, this language is needed for studying or working; in our region, this is due to our location. Volyn is a border region. Our neighbor is Poland. That is why most people going to study or work in Poland; Poland is our neighbor and strategic partner. Also, many students go to study in Poland after graduation. Many Ukrainians work in Poland; in my opinion, people learn the Polish language mostly for being able to work or study in Poland; in Poland, we are available to get high-paying jobs and quality education; many students like studying in Poland (group L); to get higher education in Poland; because I want to go to Poland to work or study; because it is one of the languages of the European Union, a neighbor of Ukraine. Poland creates opportunities for education and employment (group O).*
3. the opportunity to reside permanently in Poland: *to go abroad; to go to work and live in Poland; they want to move to Poland; to go to Poland for permanent residence or temporary stay; many people see their future abroad, and they need to know the language to feel free; many people see their future abroad, and to feel freer you need the language knowledge; to move to Poland in search for a better job; for career or relocation; to move to permanent residence (group L); they plan to go to Poland; to work in Poland and stay there; Poland has a better standard of living, and everyone dreams of living there (group O).*

Quite often, our respondents combined these groups into one: *for many, this language is needed for study or work; will work there or move to a permanent place of residence (group L); labor, educational migration, emigration; study and work in Poland; to live, work in Poland; for employment, study or residence in Poland (group O).*

Sporadically, respondents distinguished other reasons for learning Polish such as:

1. cooperation between Ukraine and Poland: *because it is promising and allows cooperating with our Polish neighbors; because of the neighborhood; it is a neighboring country, so at least in Volyn, every second person needs to know this language. Poland is Ukraine's neighbor and therefore has much in common. It is a neighboring country, so in my opinion, knowledge of the language is required* (group L).
2. self-development: *for self-education; for general development; to be competent and gain knowledge if needed; I believe that the study of foreign languages, as well as Polish, is promising today. It is crucial to have the education to achieve goals and get what you want; for yourself and your development* (group L); *enrich the knowledge of different languages; they see prospects in working abroad thanks to Polish, and also study it for their personal development; because they want to increase their knowledge* (group O);
3. better employment prospects in Ukraine: *because, at this time, the Polish language has become very popular in Ukraine. There are many job options; Related to work; It is the language of career growth; Because the Polish language is becoming increasingly popular. Many Polish companies in Ukraine need experts in the Polish language. Poland is situated close to Ukraine, so it is possible to go to work, and undoubtedly, with language knowledge, the work will be more prestigious; to have some prospects in Ukraine; better work perspective* (group L); *knowledge of a foreign language significantly increases the chances of getting a promising, high-paid job* (group O).
4. tourism: *they have many relatives and friends in Poland; to use it when traveling to Poland; for fluent communication with native speakers for visits to Poland; Poland is a neighboring country, so it is possible to visit it and travel better, knowing the language + work* (group O).
5. family ties: *the language of ancestors; historically, many of us had Polish roots. + neighboring country; they have many relatives and friends in Poland* (group O).

In response to the question "Do you think learning Polish is useful or just a waste of time?", 99.9% of respondents consider learning Polish to be beneficial. Some respondents even explained the benefits of learning this language: *I think that learning Polish is relevant and it is worth the time because it opens up new opportunities for a person; at least it's interesting, pumps your level, another additional skill; Useful for self-development, for the ability to translate various texts, even fiction; It is obvious, that language exchange and expands of the worldview which is a consequence of communication with other people, it is always helpful; It is advantageous, because "As many languages you know, so many times you are human" – Goethe; It develops you, so it's useful, much better sticking in the phone; Of course it is usable. Learning a foreign language provides an opportunity to study and research the history and culture of different countries and nations. Critical thinking also develops; Personally, it has always been beneficial for several reasons: learning the language also meant getting to know the culture and traditions of the Polish people, and this cannot be uninteresting. In addition to this, the Polish language opened up the opportunity to participate in student exchange programs. Nowadays, I participate in volunteer projects of translation and use the acquired knowledge. Also, I was able to study more literature in my scientific field thanks to the Polish language knowledge* (group O); *You can spend your time well because the process of learning foreign languages has a good effect on brain development; Of course, the process of language learning opens up a wide range of opportunities, and for our territories, it is best to learn the language that is the closest to us; It is beneficial. It develops our mental capabilities and gives us more chances for a better job in the future; As learning any language is valuable, so I do not think that learning Polish is a waste of time; In any case, this is a development. In my opinion, this is promising; I think it is advantageous because we develop our speech, worldview, and ourselves in particular. Any language learning is good, at least in terms of intellectual development, especially when you never know where you may be in 5 or 10 years; It is also good to invest in your development; Useful, informative, Polish language opens borders in communication, provides a better understanding of people, allows you to watch TV series or movies, read books written in*

the original language; I think that learning any language is very ultrapractical. The person expands his language skills. It helps in the modern world; it also allows going abroad, in this case, to Poland; Learning anything is beneficial. I'm glad I know Polish. I'm sure she will suit me more than once; Useful for outlook, enhances communication skills and culture; Useful because it is one of the most complex languages in the world. If we start from complicated things, then all other languages will be more than capable; We need to learn foreign languages in any case, especially Polish as it is the language of our neighbors (group L).

Only 0.1% of respondents do not see the benefits of learning Polish: Personally, it is a waste of time for me, but everyone has their reasons for learning; I don't need this language at the moment, I think it's better to know English perfectly than a bunch of things (group L).

4 Conclusion

The survey described in this article allows us to draw the following conclusions:

1. The most powerful motivator for learning Polish is the respondents' awareness of the importance of foreign languages in modern society, as well as the opportunity to connect their future professional life with the Polish language (44.1% in group L and 50% in group O). Slightly less powerful motivators are the desire to work, study or live in Poland;
2. The following two factors have an impact on the level of proficiency in Polish: the period of time spent studying (67.1% of respondents from Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University had been studying Polish for two or more years, while 73.5% from the National University of Ostroh Academy had been studying the language for between six months and a year); and the possibility to implement the knowledge, skills and abilities acquired in their studies in a Polish-speaking environment (11.8% of respondents from group L had been in Poland more than ten times, 13% had visited between 5 and 10 times, while respondents from group O had mostly visited Poland between two to four times (27.5%) or only once (19.6%)). At Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University, 44.7% of respondents have a B1–B2 level of language knowledge, which is higher than in respondents from the National University of Ostroh Academy (15.7%).
3. Due to the global Covid-19 pandemic, only about 18% of students had been to work in Poland during the holidays. On the other hand, 54.7% of group L and 46.1% of group O have family members working in Poland.
4. More than half of the respondents do not intend to study in Poland. In group O, this figure is as high as 70.6%, and in group L it is slightly lower at 62.1%. 72% of people from group L and 76.5% from group O do not plan to continue their studies in Polish universities. Instead, they intend to work in Poland (51.6% of people from group L and 46.1% from group O).
5. Respondents from group L speak Polish more often than respondents from group O. 57.1% do so several times a week and 11.8% use Polish every day. 37.3% of people from group O rarely speak Polish and only 3.9% of students speak it every day. The most common areas of daily contact with Polish is the Internet, namely online resources for finding information, including information necessary for studying (62.7% in group L, 39.2% in group O), watching movies (47.2% group L, 36.3% group O), reading the news (36% group L, 23.5% group O), and taking notes and writing abstracts (22.4% group L, 34.3% group O).
6. Most often, our respondents speak Polish with their teachers (90.1% in group L and 65.7% group O). 71.4% of people from group L and 57.8% of people from group O declared a desire to learn Polish and stated that they enjoy this language.

The situation of Polish in the analysed regions requires more extensive research, especially in the context of multilingualism among Polish language learners. The power of the Polish language is increasing and it is beginning to see a shift in its status from a national minority language to the ranks of foreign languages, which could see Polish evolve into an alternative to more established foreign languages.

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